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RUDGUSC/USCUSTOMS WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAMA 000923

SIPDIS

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NEA/ARP, NEA/PI, IO/OIC, EB/TRA
STATE PASS TO USTR FOR JBUNTIN AND DWALLACE
COMMERCE FOR USPTO
COAST GUARD ROTTERDAM FOR LCDR RKEITH
HOMELAND SECURITY/CBP FOR RVGONZALEZ

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TAGS: [EWWT](#) [ECON](#) [ASEC](#) [KMPI](#) [BA](#) [REGION](#) [BILAT](#) [OFFICIALS](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR AND CUSTOMS HEAD OPEN MEPI IPR
WORKSHOP, REVIEW CUSTOMS AND PORTS ISSUES

Classified By: Ambassador William T. Monroe, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (U) The Ambassador joined President of Customs, Ports and Free Zones Shaikh Daij Bin Salman Al-Khalifa May 21 to open a MEPI-funded USPTO Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Border Enforcement Workshop. The two met on May 22 to discuss bilateral cooperation to enhance Bahrain's port security. Shaikh Daij also outlined modernization and privatization plans and assured the Ambassador that Bahraini Customs would be prepared to implement the FTA immediately upon entry into force. End Summary.

MEPI USPTO WORKSHOP

¶2. (U) The Ambassador joined Shaikh Daij Bin Salman Al-Khalifa May 21 in opening a MEPI-funded USPTO IPR Border Enforcement Workshop in Manama. Some fifty customs officials with IPR enforcement responsibilities from throughout the MEPI region attended the two-day event. The program featured presentations, panel discussions, group discussions and case studies on various aspects of IPR enforcement and received favorable local press coverage.

U.S. EXPERTISE SOUGHT

¶3. (U) In a meeting on May 22, Shaikh Daij praised the conference. "We need to publicize the positive stories as much as we can," he said. He hoped to expand cooperation and coordination with the U.S. to enhance Bahraini port security and said he wished to see additional workshops and other training opportunities. He welcomed U.S. advice and expertise. Further visits from U.S. experts as well as Bahraini visits to consult with counterparts in the U.S. would be useful. He is also seeking capacity-building assistance from the International Maritime Organization.

¶4. (U) The Ambassador thanked Shaikh Daij for his office's support of a recent U.S. Coast Guard team's evaluation of Bahrain's implementation of the International Ship and Port

Facility Security Code, a comprehensive set of measures to enhance the security of ships and port facilities. Shaikh Daij expressed interest in receiving a copy of any report on the Coast Guard team's findings. The Ambassador assured him that Post looked forward to assisting in this regard.

CUSTOMS AND PORTS TO MODERNIZE AND PRIVATIZE

¶5. (C) Shaikh Daij said that since he had assumed his position in March, he had sought to modernize Customs, Ports and Free Zones. "They accuse me here of moving very fast - I want this to be a more efficient organization." He complained that the bureaucracy he had inherited continued to rely on manual procedures and said he had initiated a move to automated processes that he hoped would be complete before the end of the year, when his offices were scheduled to relocate to Hidd, near the new Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman port. He described his plans for right-sizing; roughly half of his 1400 employees were to be offered early retirement at year end. Half of these would be offered employment by new port concessionaire AP Moeller.

¶6. (SBU) Shaikh Daij said that prior to the privatization of Bahrain's ports, concession decrees still needed to be passed by the Shura (parliamentary upper house) before the projected session close at the end of June. He said there were also six agreements that needed to be finalized with AP Moeller before the handover could be completed. (Note: AP Moeller officials told Econoff May 7 that the firm intends to assume management of Mina Salman port in July. End Note)

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¶7. (U) Shaikh Daij said construction of the new Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Port in Hidd would be complete in two years and would begin operations in 2009. He predicted the new port would open smoothly, as AP Moeller will by then have had substantial experience running Mina Salman port.

FTA

¶8. On preparations for U.S.-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement (FTA) implementation, Shaikh Daij said that ironically, Bahraini Customs' reliance on manual processes could allow for more flexible and rapid accommodation of the FTA. He assured the Ambassador that Bahraini Customs would implement the FTA from day one of entry into force. "If your people are doing it, ours will be doing it."

MONROE